

Article - Education

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§7–101.2.

- (a) (1) In this section the following terms have the meanings indicated.
 - (2) “Economically disadvantaged background” means a family whose income is no more than 300% of the federal poverty guidelines.
 - (3) “Eligible young child” means a child:
 - (i) Who is from an economically disadvantaged background;
 - (ii) Whose parent or legal guardian seeks to enroll the child in a publicly funded prekindergarten program established under this section; and
 - (iii) Who is 3 or 4 years old on September 1 of the school year in which the parent or legal guardian seeks to enroll the child in a publicly funded prekindergarten program established under this section.
 - (4) “Fund” means the Prekindergarten Expansion Fund.
 - (5) “Program” means the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program.
 - (6) “Qualified provider” means:
 - (i) If partnering with a county board under a memorandum of understanding, a State accredited or nationally accredited child care program or a nonpublic school approved by the Department to provide prekindergarten services; and
 - (ii) A county board.
- (b) (1) There is a grant program known as the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program in the State.
- (2) The purpose of the Program is to broaden the availability of high-quality prekindergarten and school readiness services throughout the State for children and their families in coordination with the expansion of publicly funded full-day prekindergarten under The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future established under Subtitle 1A of this title.

(3) The Department shall administer the Program.

(4) (i) The Program shall be a competitive grant program to provide funds to qualified providers.

(ii) The Department shall take measures to achieve geographic diversity among participating qualified providers.

(iii) Priority for participation in the Program shall be given to qualified providers:

1. That are located in areas of the State that have an unmet need for prekindergarten or comprehensive early childhood education services;

2. That include a plan for long-term sustainability, including community and business partnerships and matching funds to the extent possible; and

3. That incorporate parental engagement and the benefits of educational activities beyond the classroom into the providers' programs.

(iv) Prekindergarten Expansion Grants may be used to expand prekindergarten services, including:

1. Establishing or expanding full-day prekindergarten for eligible young children; and

2. Expanding existing half-day prekindergarten programs into full-day prekindergarten programs for eligible young children.

(v) The Department may establish:

1. Additional eligibility criteria for the selection of qualified providers;

2. Application and award processes including the submission date for applications, renewal procedures, and application review processes for making awards under the Program; and

3. Any other policies and procedures necessary to implement the Program.

(c) Before approving qualified providers for prekindergarten services to receive a grant under this section, a qualified provider shall certify to the Department that for each classroom funded under this section the provider will:

(1) Maintain a student-to-classroom personnel ratio of no more than 10 to 1 with a maximum of 20 children per classroom;

(2) Provide in each classroom at least one teacher certified in early childhood education by the State and at least one teacher's aide who has at least a high school degree;

(3) Operate an educational program for:

(i) 5 days per week;

(ii) 180 days per year, in accordance with the public school calendar established by the local school board; and

(iii) 1. For half-day programs, at least 2.5 hours per day; or

2. For full-day programs, at least 6.5 hours per day;

and

(4) To receive a grant under this section, meet the requirements of § 7-1A-04 of this title.

(d) (1) (i) Beginning in fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2025, the Governor shall annually appropriate to the Fund an amount that is at least equal to the total amount of all funds received by the Program in the prior fiscal year.

(ii) Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the funds appropriated to the Fund shall be consolidated into the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program established in Subtitle 1A of this title.

(2) The Governor may provide funds to the Department to administer the Program.

(e) Grants awarded under this section may not be used:

(1) To supplant existing funding for prekindergarten services;

(2) For capital improvements; or

(3) To fund the same full-day prekindergarten slot that is funded under Subtitle 1A of this title.

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